

Forest Plan Components— Suitability of Lands

Specific lands within a plan area will be identified as suitable for various multiple uses or activities based on the desired conditions applicable to those lands. The plan will also identify lands within the plan area as not suitable for uses that are not compatible with desired conditions for those lands. The suitability of lands need not be identified for every use or activity. Suitability identifications may be made after consideration of historic uses and of issues that have arisen in the planning process. Every plan must identify those lands that are not suitable for timber production (§ 219.11). (36 CFR 219.7(e)(1)(v)).

Suitable

Identifying the suitability of lands for a use indicates that the use might be appropriate rather than a commitment to allow such uses, and final suitability determinations occur at the project and activity stage.

For instance, a plan may identify a management area as suitable for utility corridors, which does not imply that any application for pipeline construction would be approved. All applications would be subject to special use authorization requirements, standard permit clauses, standards and guidelines, environmental analysis, National Environmental Policy Act procedures, public and governmental participation, and project and activity decision making.

Identifying suitability of areas for a land use must not be written in terms indicating that the identification is final.

Future uses may be approved or disapproved regardless of whether the plan has determined the area is suitable for such uses.

Not Suitable

If the plan identifies an area as not suitable for a multiple use or activity then the use or activity may not be authorized unless a plan amendment is approved. Such identification in a plan does not affect any unregulated public use (sec. 24.17).

A plan may not identify a use as being suitable in the plan area or relevant part of the plan area (and should identify a use as being not suitable) if any of the following conditions apply:

- The use would not likely be compatible with the desired conditions and objectives
- Law, regulation, Executive order, or Forest Service directive prohibit the use
- The use would result in substantial and permanent impairment of the productivity of the land or renewable resources.

Use of Suitability and Nonsuitability Statements

Plans may include suitability or nonsuitability statements for the multiple purposes of outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish. Plans may also include suitability or non-suitability statements for more narrowly defined uses such as: administrative or commercial communication sites, commercial use of non-timber forest products, cross-country over-snow vehicle use, educational use, existing range structures, helicopter skiing, mechanized travel, motorized travel, non-commercial uses, non-mechanized travel, non-motorized travel, range

structures, recreational trails, research activities, tethering and grazing of recreational stock, utility corridors, and wheeled motorized travel.

Plans should not include any suitability or non-suitability statements for the use of management tools, such as prescribed fire, clearcutting, or use of chemicals, unless to do so would contribute to the collaborative planning process. (A guideline or standard may be used to provide limitations or direction on whether or how a specific tool is appropriate.)

May apply to all or part of the plan area

Examples

- Areas along and within 100 feet of designated motorized travel routes are suitable for motorized dispersed camping (that is, camping outside designated campgrounds).
- Semi-primitive non-motorized areas are suitable for timber harvest (including salvage), for multiple-use purposes.
- Semi-primitive non-motorized areas are also suitable for commercial harvest of non-timber forest products.
- Areas along, and within 100 feet of riparian areas are not suitable for motorized dispersed camping (that is, camping outside designated campgrounds).
- Areas identified as “semi-primitive non-motorized” are not suitable for motorized recreation.

Example of Suitability

Table 2. Sample Suitable and Not Suitable in Identified Special Areas

Identified Special Areas	Broad Use Categories			
	Livestock Grazing	Summer Motor Vehicle Use	Over-Snow Vehicles	Utility Corridors
Bent Canyon Bluffs	Suitable	Not suitable	Suitable	Suitable
Campo RNA	Not suitable	Suitable	Suitable	Not suitable